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## Hospital Patient Satisfaction: Minority Views of the Hospital Experience

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In 1998 legislation was passed requiring statewide reporting on both clinical performance and patient satisfaction in Rhode Island's health care facilities. Two reports on hospital patient satisfaction have been published (Fall 2001<sup>1</sup> and Fall 2003<sup>2</sup>) by the Rhode Island Department of Health. These reports showed patient views of their hospital experience in RI. Patients who were age 18 or older were surveyed after they went home from the hospital. Respondents included all ages, both males and females, and different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Due to the small number of patients in each of these categories, hospital-specific data were reported for all respondents at each hospital by type of service.

In surveys of discharged hospital patients, patient age and health status, not racial or ethnic differences, were most consistently related to satisfaction. A recent study found that African Americans and Hispanics were more satisfied with their health plan than whites and that African Americans were more satisfied with their physician or nurse than whites.<sup>3</sup> However, the latest CAHPS (formerly the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans) data for the RI commercially insured population revealed that minorities were less satisfied with their specialists and health care in general than white health plan members.<sup>4</sup>

Despite mixed satisfaction ratings, disparities in access to care and in services received by minorities persist. For example, in RI, only 7% of whites reported being uninsured, compared to 19% of Blacks and 16% of Hispanics.<sup>5</sup> Recognizing disparities in access to care, as well as in disease and mortality, the RI Department of Health initiated a project to examine potential disparities in hospital patient satisfaction.

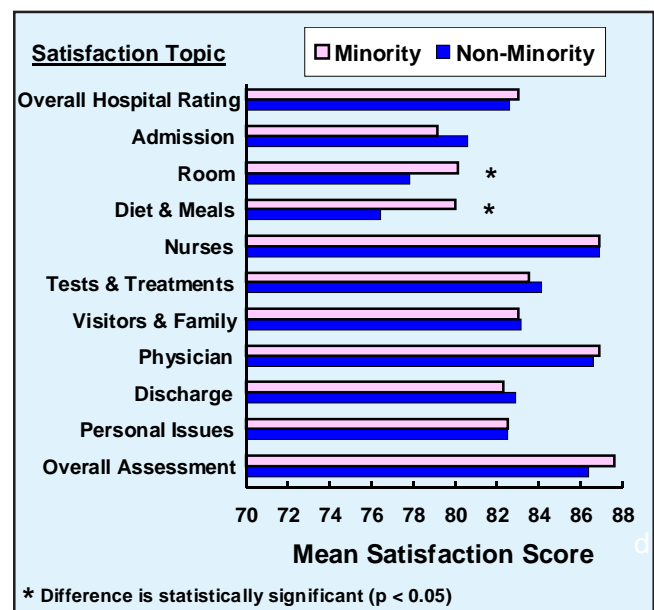
The purpose of this report is to add to our understanding of hospital patient satisfaction in RI by comparing views of minority and non-minority patients.

**Methods.** This report on minority patient views is based on the 2003 statewide survey of patients discharged from all eleven general hospitals in RI. The data come from 4,668 surveys completed by medical and surgical patients; details of the survey methods can be found in the Technical Report.<sup>6</sup> The data are aggregated across all hospitals statewide. There

were 240 (5.1%) respondents who reported themselves in any minority racial or ethnic group, including 113 (2.4%) who reported themselves as Hispanic.<sup>7</sup> Two comparisons are presented: (1) between all minority groups and the non-minority group (i.e., whites); and (2) between the Hispanic group and all non-Hispanic groups. (On the survey, separate questions were asked of the respondent concerning Hispanic origin and race.) The minority group includes: African-American, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Hispanic.

The survey responses reported are the mean satisfaction scores on each survey topic. The mean scores are the average of the satisfaction scores for patients at each hospital, averaged across all eleven general hospitals. Each topic score is a composite of several items. For example, the topic "Nurses" included items such as the promptness of nurses in responding to the call button; and the "Overall Assessment" included items such as likelihood of recommending the hospital to others. In the graphs, the height of the bar indicates the mean score. An asterisk next to the topic indicates that the difference between the comparison groups is statistically significant, that is, likely to represent a real difference between the groups.

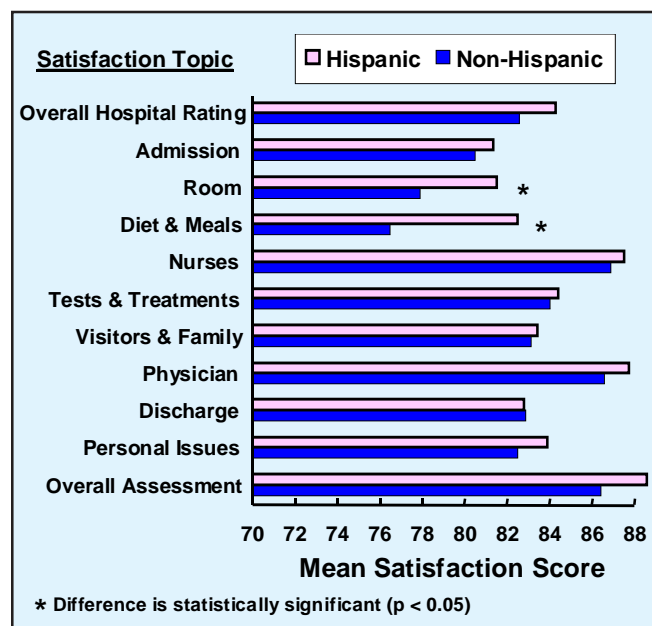
**Results.** The results are based on the responses of patients discharged from the medical and surgical units of the hospitals. The bar graphs display the mean topic scores and the "Overall Hospital Rating" (a summary of all the topics). Figure 1 shows the results for the minority group compared



**Figure 1.** Patient satisfaction scores, by satisfaction topic and minority status, hospitals in Rhode Island, 2003

## Health by Numbers

to non-minority groups; Figure 2 shows results for the Hispanic group compared to non-Hispanic groups.



**Figure 2.** Patient satisfaction scores, by satisfaction topic and Hispanic status, hospitals in Rhode Island, 2003

The topics receiving the highest satisfaction scores from all groups are Nurses, Physician, and Overall Assessment. Topics with the lowest scores are Admission, Room, and Meals. The comparison groups differ significantly on two topics. For both Room and Meals, the minority group reports greater satisfaction than the non-minority group ( $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.005$ , respectively). On the Admission topic, the minority group reports slightly less satisfaction than the non-minority group, a difference that might be due to chance. Similarly, the Hispanic group reports greater satisfaction with both Room and Meals than the non-Hispanic groups ( $p < 0.03$  and  $p < 0.001$ , respectively). On all other topics, the Hispanic group reports slightly higher satisfaction than the non-Hispanic group, but none of these differences is significant.

**Discussion.** It appears that the RI data on minority status of the patient and their level of satisfaction is similar to that reported in the literature. Based on these results, minority and Hispanic hospital patients in the state are more satisfied

than non-minority and non-Hispanic patients on some topics. However, minority and Hispanic patients may have access problems that were not measured in this survey. The lower scores of minority patients on the Admission topic may mean that some minority patients are spending a longer time in the emergency room than non-minority patients before they are admitted. Additional studies of emergency room systems are being conducted by the hospitals working with the RI Department of Health and the Hospital Association of Rhode Island. As reported in other studies,<sup>8</sup> response rates for minority and Hispanic patients vary considerably; a pilot project is underway in RI to address this issue.

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